

Planning a Story Lesson | My Experience

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This article offers an empirical account of how to teach a story from a textbook in the classroom through a thoughtfully created lesson plan. The teacher sets the objectives of teaching the story based on learning outcomes and then tries out effective methods to achieve those objectives. The extent of her success, the challenges that come her way, and how she resolves them are all part of the article.



Figure 1: A structured lesson plan helps students better understand, imagine and voice their perspectives.

The story

Munshi Premchand's story *Nadan Dost* (naive friend) portrays the simple and curious nature of children. Keshav and Shyama are siblings. A bird lays eggs in their house. They are eager to know what the eggs look like—wondering how the chicks will hatch, what they will eat, how they will live, and so on. The children take various steps to shield the eggs from the afternoon sun and rain. They even place a bowl of water and rice nearby. In their attempt to care for the baby birds, the children make a grave mistake that they deeply regret. The story connects closely with the children's surroundings. Since birds often build nests in homes, every child in the class can relate to the story at a personal level.

The objectives

This story is included in *Vasant*, the NCERT Hindi textbook for class VI. For my preparation, I read the language teaching outcomes prescribed for this level. Based on these outcomes, I identified a few key objectives while planning the lesson:

- Children would be able to form an emotional connection with the story through discussion.
- They would develop a sensitivity towards animals, birds and nature.
- They would grasp the story in depth and cultivate a curiosity to read more such works.

It was also important that the lesson offered opportunities for children to think, enrich their language skills and vocabulary, nurture their imagination, and relate the story to their own experiences. Another objective was to encourage critical thinking in the narrative, its events and characters.

Discussion on pictures

On the first day, while reading the story, I engaged the children in a discussion about the accompanying illustrations to familiarise them with the narrative. Pointing to the pictures, I asked, 'What do you see here?' The children responded, 'A bird is sitting on her eggs, just like a hen does. She is incubating the eggs so that babies can hatch from them.'

Munmun said, 'The bird is looking around, to make sure no one takes her eggs away.'

Similarly, looking at the second picture, Meenu replied, 'I think the bird is trying to say something. Maybe its eggs are in danger!'

Regarding the third illustration, the children said, 'Keshav and Shyama are climbing up to see, peering at the bird's eggs, even touching them and cleaning around the eggs.'

Rohit said, 'But we should not touch bird eggs. That's what my grandmother says.' Many children agreed with them. They shared how when they see a nest, they feel tempted to go close to it to look inside. Throughout this conversation, the children were beautifully connecting with their surroundings.

Another picture showed two children and their mother. As soon as I asked about it, the children responded, 'The brother and sister must have touched the bird's eggs; their mother is scolding them.' Some children disagreed with this, but Rupali said, 'They are definitely being beaten, mothers do not just explain things like that.'



Figure 2: An illustration from the story (textbook Vasant, NCERT).

“ I created a group of children who were learning slowly, and another group of those who were doing well. Reading together helped them learn by observing each other . ”

Dhania exclaimed, 'We will only know once we read the story. Let us read it!' The children were eager to find out what had really happened. Those who could read fluently said, 'See! I was right. They touched the eggs. They did not even tell their mother.'

Reading the story

I sat with the children who were still learning to read and helped them with letter sounds and syllables. Though they could relate to the story through its pictures, they were struggling to read. I had them read a paragraph repeatedly. Eventually, they became familiar with the letters, words, and sentence structures. They were beginning to guess and read. I created a group of children who were learning slowly, and another group of those who were doing well. Reading together helped them learn by observing each other. The children who could already read and write well read the story with great interest.

Exploring the meanings of new words and idioms

The next day, I read aloud some excerpts from the story to the children, placing special emphasis on explaining the meanings of new and complex words and idioms that appeared in the story. For example, '*karun swar*'.

Only Munmun responded, saying, 'To speak in a sad or worried manner.' For '*chehre ka rang udna*', Surendra explained, 'It means to feel scared.' Most children could not explain the meanings because the words seemed a bit complex or unfamiliar to them. When I asked them about the phrase '*bheegi billi*', more than half the class answered, 'to be gentle and innocent'. (In English, it means to cower or crouch down with fear).

The students' responses made it clear that many were still unfamiliar with idiomatic expressions. So,

then I wrote a few idioms on the blackboard, like: *Nau do gyaarah ho jana, Eid ka chaand hona, Aankhon ka taara*, etc. One child promptly contributed a few more: *Naak mein dam karna, Eit ka jawaab pattar se dena*. His familiarity suggested that he had heard these idioms in everyday conversations. When I asked him, he said, 'When I bother Mummy, she says I have made her life miserable.' (He used a Hindi idiom to convey this.) The entire class was thoroughly amused by this response.

I told the students that such expressions are called idioms. Through them, we can convey our thoughts effectively using just a few words. Now, each child was trying to create their own sentences using idioms.

The story and its sequence of events

We continued our discussion on the sequence of events in the story. The children shared that a bird had laid its eggs on the cornice of Keshav and Shyama's house. The children were eager to touch the eggs. They began placing things nearby under various pretexts, and eventually, the eggs broke. Shyam recounted the sequence of events, 'A bird laid eggs at Keshav and Shyama's house. They kept food near the eggs so that the birds would not have to go out in search of food. Keshav and Shyama, driven by curiosity, not only climbed up to look at the eggs but also picked them and placed them on a piece of cloth. The birds abandoned the eggs and the nest. The eggs fell and broke. Keshav and Shyama had acted childishly, and they felt very sorry about it later.'

The setting and period of the story

Now I asked the children, 'In which era would this story have been written? What was the setting, and what would life have been like at that time?'

Someone said, 'It is from the old days in our village.' Raju responded, 'It is from the time when houses were made of tiles and bricks, because more birds make nests in tiled roofs and huts.' Meenu offered a very different answer, 'It might be from our grandparents' time because back then there used to be many trees and fields.' The children gave the question much thought. Dhaniya said, 'Nowadays, we do not even know when and where a bird builds its nest.'

Possibility of a new story emerging

When the discussion turned to how Keshav and Shyama used to talk with each other and ask questions about the nest and the birds, the children gave exciting responses. Munmun said, 'They did not have any friends. If they had, their names would have definitely appeared in the



Figure 3: Another illustration from the story (textbook Vasant, NCERT).

story. If they had talked it over together, perhaps the eggs could have been saved. Sometimes friends give good advice.' Munmun's answer gave the story a new direction. I said to her, 'Imagine, if Keshav and Shyama had a friend, how would the story change?' Munmun replied excitedly, 'Yes, madam, I will think about it and write a new story.'

Characters of the story

When asked, 'What do you learn about Keshav and Shyama from reading this story?' Many children said that the two had realised their mistake. They were very good children who wanted to see the baby birds hatch. They tried to help the bird, but the eggs broke. They felt very sorry about it.

What did you like and what did you not like?

When asked, 'Which part of the story did you like the most?' The children replied, 'We liked the whole story a lot.' Surendra added, 'After the eggs broke, their mother started scolding both the children. At that moment, Shyama sided with her mother—I liked that.' While reading the story, the entire class especially enjoyed the line where Shyama asks Keshav where the chicks have gone, and he answers annoyedly, 'On your head!'

Rohit said, 'Shyama put all the blame on Keshav first, but she later realised her mistake.' Raju said, 'I liked the part where both of them were very happy to see the baby birds, and Shyama kept asking Keshav, 'Bhaiya, how are the babies doing? What will they eat? What do they look like?'

Since the children found so many things to enjoy in the story, it became essential to ask, 'What did you not like in the story?' This would make them think deeply and express their thoughts with imagination. Pratima responded, 'I did not like it at all when the eggs fell and broke.' Many of the children agreed with her.

A different perspective

Kishan's comment completely turned the whole story around. He said, 'The bird should not have dropped the eggs. It should have understood that just as she has babies, Keshav and Shyama are also someone's children. The bird felt so bad just because they touched the eggs that it dropped its own eggs! Because of this, the children were scolded, and Keshav could not sleep at night either.'

This answer sparked a lively discussion in the class about whether this could really happen. The bird only thinks of its nest and its children; it does not have human-like intelligence. Munmun said, 'They are smarter than us. If she had thought that, how would she have even told us?'

Connection with the author

Now it was time to introduce the children to the author of the story. 'Who could have written such a beautiful story?' I asked. The children did not know. I showed them a picture of Munshi Premchand on my phone and said,

'He wrote this story. Have you read any other stories by Premchand?' The children could not recall anything, so I reminded them of the lesson on the story titled *Idgah* from class V. All their faces lit up with joy. It was vital for them to become acquainted with the author so that they could be encouraged to read more of his stories. I will make sure to provide them with those books from our library.

What I discovered and understood

Working on this lesson, I was able to evaluate myself as to how far I had met the intended objectives, what remained unachieved, and what challenges I faced. I observed that most children at an early reading level were unable to participate in the discussion. One child said, 'This story is very long. I do not understand it.' Many other children in the class found it difficult to understand the lesson and express their thoughts. I will need to work with them using NCERT's *Barkha* series and other children's literature.

Through a structured lesson plan, I observed that the children were able to relate to the composition, events and characters of the story. Their emotional connection was evident in their answers. They were forming their own opinions about each event and character. Each child was expressing agreement or disagreement with reasons and justifications. This allowed them to think, understand, imagine and voice their perspectives. At times, their responses were quite surprising. They also showed curiosity about other stories. Working with the children on this was easy and built a special kind of bond between the children and me.

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